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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Hungary

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SUBJECT Effect of Land Distribution on the Hungarian
Landowner

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1. In my estimation, land distribution in Hungary has been a failure because the proletariat and other landless groups, who in the early stages after World War II clamored for an equitable distribution of land, now refuse in most cases to work it diligently. From 1945 to 1948, the Hungarian Government

25X1

surveyed all lands which were to be distributed among the people. This land which was held by the peasantry (members of the Land Holders Party) had for many years prior to World War II been a consistent agricultural producer for Hungary. Excluding the Hortobagy Steppe west of Debrecen which is a pastoral region, surveyed 20 villages in addition to the immediate environs of Debrecen.

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(The Land Holders Party in years prior to Communist control always obtained a large portion of the votes cast each year.)

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2. When land distribution was first proposed by the New Hungarian State even prior to actual Communist control, the Land Holders Party opposed

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

25X1

such distribution for a number of reasons:

- a. Naturally the lands which they owned and cultivated were their own and were, of course, private property. They did not desire to lose what they felt was rightfully theirs through either perpetuation or prior purchase.
- b. They were aware that the movement for this distribution was begun by the so-called proletariat (landless people) who desired to obtain, at no cost, something to which the proletariat had not earned the right.
- c. [redacted] the real clamor for land distribution lay much deeper than the expressions of the proletariat. [redacted] those who clamored loudest, a number of disciplined Communists, were in reality acting under orders from Moscow. 25X1
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- d. It was felt by members [redacted] that this land reform was the primary target of the Soviet Union in the full realization that their strongest opposition would come from the land holders of Hungary who were definitely opposed to the Communist social and economic order. They realized that under the guise of land reform, the USSR was concentrating on the eventual dissipation of the strength of the Land Holders Party. During the entire period of [redacted] surveying the lands held by the old Hungarian land owners [redacted] engaged in conversations with many of them. They, without exception, were definitely opposed to distribution and, in particular, opposed to Communism and the USSR. 25X1
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3. An important item [redacted] relative to any future developments in Hungary which might lead to resistance against Communism should be such that full consideration be given to the worth of the old-line peasantry of Hungary. [redacted] peasants and farmers are the backbone of opposition to Communism in Hungary. [redacted] place less emphasis upon the potential value of the city dwellers and the so-called proletariat for to them the significance of a free way of life and a sense of values does not have the same connotation as it does to the old land holders. It is this group which in reality has suffered far more, (that is universally) than any other single segment of Hungarian society. This group, of course, has one thing in common -- the desire to regain what it deems to be rightfully its own and above all to disestablish collectivism and planned economy. 25X1
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4. [redacted] the land distribution program, the following factors stand out: 25X1
 - a. In theory, land was to be distributed by preordained plan and was to be allotted in accordance with the number of members per family. The process of distribution was ostensibly premised upon fair and impartial allocation. However, in practice, there were so many cases in which a single individual (known to have been an extra liberal) received much larger parcels of land than was meted out to a family of five or six members.
 - b. No one was to be given less than one-half of one cadastral hold (1.47 acres). In surveying the 20 villages around Debrecen [redacted] the largest parcel of land allotted to any one individual or family was 15 cadastral holds. 25X1
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5. During the years of land distribution the new Hungarian State did not distribute grazing lands which in former years were considered to be excellent pastoral areas. Such land was retained by the State; however, it was used in common by all farmers.

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- 3 -

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6. Most of the land around Debrecen could be classed as good agricultural land. This posed a problem for those [redacted] who surveyed the areas. [redacted] take into consideration the amount of non-productive or semi-productive soil and to include some of it with each parcel measured. 25X1
7. [redacted] the land distribution of Hungary was a failure. [redacted] the fact that those agricultural areas of Hungary which were once systematically farmed and highly productive have, for the past several years, shown considerable decrease in yield. This [redacted] is due to the fact that by virtue of allocation of Hungarian agricultural lands to the proletariat, the industry suffers because this segment of the population is not capable of farming and in many cases realize that they must in order to survive. [redacted] a number of instances in which such recipients of land have leased them out and left for the industrial areas. 25X1
8. [redacted] Friends state that they are thoroughly disillusioned and critical of the administration. Given the opportunity, they would leave Hungary en masse or should a war come, they would definitely welcome the opportunity to carry arms to regain their former freedom. [redacted] 25X1

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